

the guardian weekly

January 2012

Level » Lower intermediate
Style » Lesson plan



Welcome to the Guardian Weekly's special news-based materials to support learners and teachers of English. Each month, the Guardian Weekly newspaper selects topical news articles that can be used to practise English language skills. The materials are graded for two levels: advanced and lower intermediate. These worksheets can be downloaded free from guardian.co.uk/weekly/. You can also find more advice for teachers and learners from the Guardian Weekly's Learning English section on the site.

Sesame Street goes to Afghanistan

Materials prepared by Janet Hardy-Gould

Instructions

Lesson focus: reading, TV vocabulary, present perfect

Materials: article, dictionaries

Time: 50 minutes

1 Tell students the article is about the programme Sesame Street. Direct learners to the questions in Student task 1 (see below). Check the words in italics. Students discuss in groups (it doesn't matter if they are unsure about the answers).

a Where is the *show* from?

b What are the *characters* called?

c What do the *puppets* look like?

d Who is the *audience*?

e What is the *formula* of the show and what *messages* does it *deliver*?

f What are typical *scenes*?

Class feedback. **10 mins**

2 Direct learners to the article and focus on the headline.

Ask: How might the show be different in Afghanistan?

Class discussion. **5 mins**

3 Direct learners to the sentences in Student task 2 (below) and go through them. Learners read the article and complete with words from the text. **10 mins**

a The programme first began in ____.

b Afghan parents don't want their children to make a noise like a ____.

c The producers dropped a scene with a family in a ____.

d The show still entertains and also gives ____ to the young viewers.

e The show is helpful because the system of ____ is poor

in Afghanistan.

f One film has a disadvantaged girl on her first visit to ____.

Answers: **a** the 1960s **b** dog **c** car **d** educational messages
e education **f** school

4 Ask: Is it a good idea to adapt Sesame Street for a country like Afghanistan? **5 mins**

5 Learners in pairs look up three unknown words from the text. **8 mins**

6 Look at the first paragraph. Ask why made is in the past simple (finished past event) and have taught is in the present perfect (began in the past and continues up to now). Revise different uses of the present perfect. Learners complete the summary in Student task 3 (below) with the verbs in brackets. Class feedback. **12 mins**

Ever since Sesame Street first **(a)** ____ (begin) in 1969 American children **(b)** ____ (learn) their letters from Big Bird and his friends. Over the years the characters **(c)** ____ (appear) in different countries around the world. Last year children in Nigeria **(d)** ____ (see) an adaptation of the show for the first time and **(e)** ____ (enjoy) meeting the characters. Recently the Sesame Workshop organization **(f)** ____ (decide) to introduce the show to Afghanistan and it **(g)** ____ (help) to make 26 programmes for local viewers.

Answers: **a** began **b** have learned **c** have appeared **d** saw
e enjoyed **f** has decided **g** has helped

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Materials sheet

Student tasks

1 Discuss these questions in groups.

- Where is the *show* from?
- What are the *characters* called?
- What do the *puppets* look like?
- Who is the *audience*?
- What is the *formula* of the show and what *messages* does it *deliver*?
- What are typical *scenes*?



Big Bird and friends
Rex Features

2 Read the article and complete these sentences with words from the text.

- The programme first began in .
- Afghan parents don't want their children to make a noise like a .
- The producers dropped a scene with a family in a .
- The show still entertains and also gives to the young viewers.
- The show is helpful because the system of is poor in Afghanistan.
- One film has a disadvantaged girl on her first visit to .

3 Complete this summary of the article by putting the verbs in brackets into the present perfect or past simple.

Ever since Sesame Street first (a) (begin) in 1969 American children (b) (learn) their letters from Big Bird and his friends. Over the years the characters (c) (appear) in different countries around the world. Last year children in Nigeria (d) (see) an adaptation of the show for the first time and (e) (enjoy) meeting the characters. Recently the Sesame Workshop organization (f) (decide) to introduce the show to Afghanistan and it (g) (help) to make 26 programmes for local viewers.

Article: Sesame Street goes to Afghanistan

- Ever since they made their first appearance on US TV in the 1960s, Big Bird and his friends have taught children around the world how to count, read and write.
- Now the characters from Sesame Street have moved all the way from New York to Afghanistan, with a few changes to make them acceptable to the local audience. For example, they no longer encourage children to sing or dance in front of the TV – or bark like a dog.
- "We tested a scene where Ernie is barking like a dog and getting Bert to copy him, but we found that parents were against it," said Tania Farzana the executive producer. "A dog is considered to be unclean, so the parents didn't understand it."
- The 26 new "Baghch-e-Simsim" programmes are a co-production between the Afghan company Moby Media, and the Sesame Workshop.
- However, the US executives keep tight control over the adaptation of their show. One scene in Afghanistan showing a family car ride was dropped because no one was wearing a seatbelt.
- Nevertheless, the Sesame Street formula remains intact, with brightly coloured puppets keeping children entertained while the programme delivers educational messages.
- "In a country with a young population and an education system that is not up to standard, reaching millions of kids through television seems the way to go," said Saad Mohseni, of Moby Media.
- Also present in the Afghan version is the social activism at the heart of Sesame Street. For a film about a girl's first day at school, the Afghan production team chose a student from the disadvantaged Hazara community.
- Sherrie Westin from Sesame Workshop, said the programme's mini-documentaries about Afghan children "celebrate diversity and introduce children from Afghanistan's various provinces to each other".

Original article by Jon Boone, rewritten by Janet Hardy-Gould